

MEETING MINUTES • AUGUST 09, 2011
ACTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB). Also present were members Anita Rogers (AR), Pam Lynn (PL), David Honn (DH), , Board of Selectmen Liaison Mike Gowing (MG), and Ron Rose (RR).

7:30pm Citizens' Concerns:

DH offered to review the current situation in regard to the South Acton Station design. KAB noted that this would better be given as an agenda item at the next meeting. DH will summarize at that time, noting landscaping as a concern.

DH also reviewed the situation regarding warning signage at the Rt. 111 West Acton crossing, noting that the Department of Public Utilities staff member assigned to the project is changing and the new representative has agreed to come out. Corey York has described the problem as being from the Central Street side of the crossing because a tall vehicle parked in the space adjacent to the crossing could impair visibility of the current warning sign. MG noted that a possible solution could include eliminating the parking space.

7:35pm There were no minutes to approve.

KAB noted the upcoming visit on August 18th by AR, MM and RR to the WAVE project to review situations with OMR. Three members will not constitute a quorum and not be an HDC open meeting.

7:45pm 278 Arlington Street

The Applicant, Dan Smith, was present.

In regard to the painting of the pressure-treated wood stair, DH noted, with a nod to MG, that the pressure-treated wood is paintable following a specific procedure of first washing the wood surface with a cleaner such as TSP and water, rinsing well, and allowing to dry. The stair should be painted with a solid (opaque) stain.

KAB asked if HDC members had seen the property in person, and noted that seeing the building in person from the public way is important for a full understanding how the low roof is visible.

Mr. Smith reviewed the situation with the low-slope porch roof in regard to snow-dump from the main roof above, ice dams and leakage, and that a better roofing solution is required, most likely a membrane roof.

Liaison AR affirmed a preference for shingles on a historic structure and DH observed that he has had similar problems on his house, also in a historic district. DH further commented that EPDM (membrane) roofing is not durable in situations when it is necessary to walk on a roof to clear snow. AR and RR noted that composition shingles over a full application of "ice and water shield" is a possibility on low-slope roofs to prevent leakage due to ice dams. AR noted that she has a tool to measure the pitch of existing roofs to ascertain if this is a possibility. RR persistently chirped in declaring that the pitch could simply be measured at the rake using the clap boards as a level line until AR and Mr. Smith caused him to "cease and desist" with the observation that this roof has multiple pitches not revealed at rakes. DH remarked that the HDC generally prefers 3-tab shingles, although the main roof currently has "architectural" shingles.

AR will meet with Mr. Smith at his house to determine the existing roof pitches and to discuss the next steps.

8:00pm Theatre III- Public Hearing

Before the public hearing was opened, DH related that a last minute email revealed that structural difficulties with the existing building have resulted in there being no funds to construct temporary steps. Restoring the entry facade and having no steps below the main doors would appear quite awkward.

At 8:00PM Chair KAB called the Public Hearing for Application No. 1127 to order, reading the published notice. Present for TheaterIII were Jamie Watt, Pamela Furnace, David Castro, Tom Wachtell, Anne Draudt (OMR), and Ed Mullen (Bluefin).

Applicant's Presentation

Jamie Watt made a PowerPoint presentation outlining the history of the historic church building, its deterioration due to weather and water intrusion, actions taken to date to repair and stabilize the structure and the phased plan to complete the building renovation and restoration. The presentation included acknowledgement that the work be in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. Because of financial considerations, the front stairs and retaining walls are now being held until the next phase of work. Current funds have been unexpectedly used for additional shoring at front of building to support steeple as a result of discovery of substantially more rot in structural members. A PDF copy of the TheaterIII presentation is attached to these minutes. Samples have been brought to show options for copper-coated aluminum for steeple cladding, Azek/composite substitute for wood where substantial rot in wood cladding at buttresses and other locations make it a more durable choice, illustrations of proposed wood panel doors.

HDC Members questions and comments

KAB: As construction of stairs (temporary/otherwise) is being held for next phase, additional CPC funding for stairs can be sought, deadline for submissions for current round of funding is approaching.

For non-traditional materials, if appearance is same as traditional, there is no standing for objection.

DH: Materials are OK. There is a question about the absence of stairs at main entry. Would appear odd. If stairs are future, would there be a platform?

AR: Was the original material at the wood buttresses shingles or sheet metal?

Applicant: The material appeared smooth in photo. (Perhaps wood or metal?).

DH: For the steeple, detailing is crucial to its appearance. For the color, brown (non-patina) cladding appears better.

AR: Question regarding weather vane material and finish.

Applicant: Existing weather vane will be replaced with composite replica. Painted black with painted gold tips.

RR: We should imagine cladding material seen in place from the distance, will not be like looking at small samples on conference table- patinated may look different. We should look for material precedents. Believed flat interlocking seams would be more traditional.

Applicant (Bluefin): Intent is to use large triangles with standing seams. Flat seams would look heavier.

DH: This is situation where building would look better without chimney. Building would actually look better without low block, if it didn't house heating equipment.

Applicant: Intent is to remove chimney and restore clapboards behind. Low block does house heat plant.

DH: Wood doors are improvement as is transom over. Hardware is a condition. We (HDC) typically prefers simple traditional butt hinges. Strap hinges not desired. Black hardware preferred, although paint colors for building not in HC jurisdiction.

AR: Question of raise panel doors vs. flat panel doors. Should have appearance of old NE church doors.

RR: Size of front doors? Answer: 3'-0" x 7'-0".

Discussion of lighting preferences:

DH: Of fixtures presented, prefers Bridgeport and Cascidion (sp?). Kept simple is better.

AR: More theatrical fixtures better at front of building.

RR: Uprturned fixtures at major areas better, they have sense of torchiers or historical, non-electric lighting suited to age of building. Fixtures with larger sizes better at front public area. Simple functional fixtures elsewhere.

KAB: There is a difficulty in perceiving size and appearance of the fixtures in (small) drawings.

AR: One could enlarge the illustrations of proposed fixtures to full size and tack on actual building to judge appearance.

Discussion of foundation

DH: The foundation appears much better.

Jamie Watt: the intent is to regrade/rebuild and clean up the concrete vents later. Vents will have a wood grille over screen. Repaired foundation around.

The representatives for the applicant and HDC members discussed the necessity that approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness be expedited to allow the applicant to immediately proceed with procuring building permits and other necessary approvals. The HDC Liaison DH and Chair KAB felt that, as procedure, this was possible with conditions that will require the applicant to continue meeting with the HDC to review the design details in a timely manner as the design and work progresses.

Chair KAB declared the Public Hearing closed at 9:03PM.

DH made a motion to approve Application No. 1127 with conditions. The motion was seconded by RR. The approval is based on the Outline of work in the PowerPoint presentation (and Application No.1127) and is subject to to the conditions added under each heading.

- **Steeple and Roof**

- Replace asphalt shingles with more historically appropriate metal
- Limited use Azek composite material where appropriate
- Repair Light in Steeple

Condition: Final finish materials and layout subject to review and approval by the HDC.

- **North Side**

- Remove non-functioning rear chimney,
- Repair clapboards, repair/add flashing,
- Limited use of Azek/composite for rotting areas as identified in PowerPoint slides.
- Replace light over fire escape

Condition: Final finish materials and layout, and light fixture selection is subject to review and approval by the HDC.

- **South Side**

- Replace steel door with historically appropriate wood
- Limited use of Azek/composite for rotting areas as identified in PowerPoint slides.
- Replace light over fire escape

Condition: Final finish materials and layout, door design and light fixture selection is subject to review and approval by the HDC.

- **Front**

- Replace front doors, restore transom lights
- Limited use of Azek/composite for rotting areas as identified in PowerPoint slides.
- Replace light fixtures, sign

Condition: Final finish materials and layout, door design, hardware, sign and light fixture selection is subject to review and approval by the HDC. Muntin dimensions for transom lites is to be specified 5/8”.

- **Foundation**

- Install appropriate venting, proper drainage

Condition: Final finish materials and layout, and design of the wood grille for vents is subject to review and approval by the HDC.

The Motion passed unanimously.

9:00pm appointment (9:15 actual) South Acton Congregational Church Sign

Present for the Church were Rev. Katrina Wuensch, Richard Crowley, Janet Crowley, William Klaner, and Susan Muller (Custom Signs).

The sign design presented in the previous application for a CoA was not approved. the applicant noted that an application fee had been paid to the Town, and that as a non-profit, the Church should not have been required to pay the fee. KAB noted that a refund should be requested as the fee was collected in error.

Alternative sign designs were presented by the Applicant, with the applicant noting that the typefaces used on all church signage is consistent, Century Schoolbook, in regular, bold and italic. HDC Liaison AR noted that the single pole designs were presented in response to the HDC's appreciation of the character of the existing sign. Susan Miller (Custom Signs) described the sign would be two-sided on a wood panel having an edge feature with applied molding incorporating a crimson painted border. The sign PL expressed preference for the single pole version with the semi-circular topped sign panel. KAB also preferred the single metal pole version. DH raised the question of the signs location on the site, noting that the hosta clump at the base of the sign appeared 2'-3' back from the sidewalk. The applicant noted that, related to zoning setback requirements, the property line is actually at the curb line, not the inside edge of the sidewalk. AR felt that as the proposed sign is similar in size to the existing sign, a similar location closer to the street is OK if other requirements are met and it has a single post. RR appreciated the craft of the existing sign post but felt that the metal post would be acceptable as there are existing metal features (bell assembly) in the building itself. All HDC members expressed preference for the panel with a semicircular top reflecting the curved opening in the tower and other building elements. It was also felt by DH and RR that the panel could be thinner (1-3/4”), incorporating a routed edge detail rather than an applied frame.

In regard to landscaping, the applicant noted that the existing hostas at the post base would be replaced with evergreen shrubs to conceal sign lighting year around. HDC members noted that lighting falls under Commission jurisdiction and will require approval, and that, small fixtures similar

to those used for signage in the WAVE project are available for ground applications.

AR made a motion, seconded by PL, that Application No. 1131 be approved with the following conditions:

- The design be the with semicircular-topped panel option supported by a single metal post.
- The text be as shown.
- The panel be 1-3/4" thick with a routed edge detail and painted border.
- Lettering be carved (incised) painted black.
- The information line at the bottom of the panel be on a changeable applied plaque.

The Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald Rose

Attachment: TheaterIII Public Hearing PowerPoint presentation.